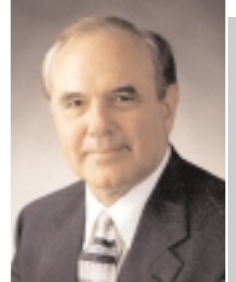


This week in the Legislature

An update from State Senator Robert Garton



INDIANAPOLIS – Teachers and other school employees who betray the trust of their positions by taking advantage of students sexually will pay a higher price for their actions if a measure passed recently by the Indiana Senate becomes law.

Introduced in response to incidents in various parts of Indiana involving teachers and their students, Senate Bill 207 strengthens state law to help protect students in public and private schools.

The major provisions of Senate Bill 207 include:

- providing school administrators access to background checks on all employees rather than only new employees;
- requiring school administrators to be notified immediately when an employee who instructs or supervises children has been arrested for or convicted of a felony;
- requiring the state Superintendent of Public Instruction to be notified immediately when a teacher has been arrested for a felony; discharged for immorality, misconduct, incompetency or neglect of duty; or resigned to avoid discharge;
- adding to the offenses for which a teacher's license must be revoked permanently the crimes of kidnapping if the victim is less than 18 years of age, criminal confinement if the victim is less than 18 years of age and dealing in a controlled substance; and
- outlining the criminal charges which could be used by a school board to suspend a teacher without pay.

Here is a brief recap of other education-related proposals adopted by the Senate this year.

Senate Bill 55 allows the parents of a public school student to request a transfer for the student to enroll in a different public school in the student's school corporation or a public school in another school corporation. The transfer must be for academic opportunities and not for sports programs, the bill stipulates. Also, parents would be responsible for the additional cost of the student transferring out of a home school district and for providing the student's transportation.

Senate Bill 103 provides that state funds received by school corporations for academic honors awards must be used for school programs related to academic honors or high-ability students. The funds are intended to be used by schools to augment their honors programs; however, some school districts simply pass along the funds to students who receive academic honors diplomas.

Senate Bill 169 makes changes in school corporations' annual performance reports and moves the date by which the reports must be published each year from September to January. Changes to the reports will include more information on staff professional development; parental participation; and partnerships with the community, business or higher education.

Under the bill, the reports also will tell how many teachers are teaching the subject area for which they are licensed, how many teachers have national board certification, the number and percentage of students who have limited English proficiency, and the number and percentage of Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I.

If Senate Bill 292 becomes law, a representative of exceptional learners (which includes students with disabilities and high ability) will be added to the Indiana Education Roundtable. Members of the roundtable are working to strengthen academic standards by subject and grade level and to evaluate the ISTEP program.

The measure also states that school improvement plans required under P.L. 221, the 1999 education accountability law, shall address the needs of all students, including exceptional learners, and requires the Indiana Department of Education to provide grants to schools corporations for programs for high-ability students.

These bills have gone to the House of Representatives for further action.



Questions or concerns on pending legislation? Contact your Senator!

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